HOW CITIES ARE GOVERNED IN ENGLAND

First of Series of Articles on the Municipal Enterprises of England, Scotland and Ireland.

ENGLAND'S RAILWAY SYSTEM

Entertaining Study and Criticism of Problems and Institutions Which Interests Americans.

By Frederick Upham Adams.

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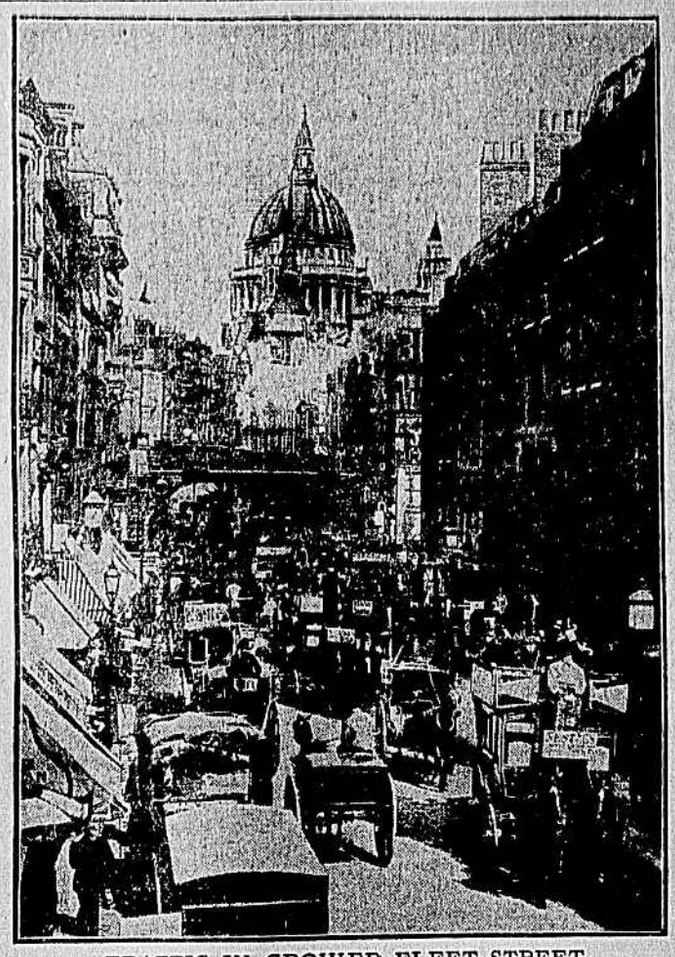

TRAFFIC IN CROWED FLEET STREET.

Introductory Note.

The Sunday Times-Dispatch offers to its readers the first of a series of papers on the municipal undertakings of Great Britain, from the pen of Frederick Upham Adams, the creator of "Colonel Monroe and His Doctrine" and author of "John Burt," "The Kidnapped Millionaires" and other well known books and essays. The government of our great cities and the eradication of the curses of bribery and favoritism occupy first places among the problems demanding attention and solution at the hands of the millions of citizens who populate our great commercial centers. Mr. Adams has long been a student of these conditions and is peculiarly fitted for the work he has selected.

Those who have read "Colonel Monroe's Doctrine" and other writings need not be assured of the literary excellence of this series of articles. The author takes his reader's with him, and together they study the real Englishman of to-day; admiring his progress, smiling at his follies and protesting at that national taint of stupidity which he fondly imagines to be conversatism.

England is facing the most momentous crisis in the history of modern nations. Her commercial, manufacturing and political existence is directly menaced by relentless outside rivals and by the inertia of a stolid internal stupidity. The alert statesmen of all countries are eagerly watching her next moves on the world's chess board, and unless signs are misleading a commercial war is pending of most stupendous magnitude and one from which the United States cannot reasonably hope to escape unscathed.

The initial paper which follows is largely devoted to a description of England's remarkable railway system, with a word painting of certain peculiarities of the world's metropolis.

London and the Londoner.

GREAT BRITAIN is in the throes of a revolution. Her antique customs and venerated institutions are in process of destruction. From out their ruins there is rearing the framework of an edifice which may typify a new civilization. The revolutionists are in absolute control, yet their numberless victories have been won without a blow struck in anger.

I claim credit for a discovery. The United States is the most conservative nation on the globe and Great Britain is the most radical. We smile at the visionary and hesitate to grant his theories the favor of a bored tolerance; Great Britain elects him to office, indorses and adopts his fancies, and by the expenditure of countless millions of treasure, willingly raised, transforms his dreams into monumental and seemingly practical realities.

In the United States the proposition that our cities should own and operate such utilities as street railways, gas and electric lighting plants and other works susceptible of monopolistic control, has not far progressed beyond the stage of academic discussion. In more than one hundred of the larger cities of the United Kingdom the right of private ownership in such properties has been repealed by legal enactments. Those of us whose knowledge of what has happened is confined to occasional newspeper comments have not the faintest conception of the stupendous momentum of this movement, or of what it portends, not to England alone, but to every civilized country on the face of the earth.

Even more startling is the paradox that this municipal radicalism has developed among the people who yet stupidly cling to obsolete customs and traditions, and whose commercial and manufacturing prestige is menaced by their refusal to adopt methods and devices of proved superiority. It shall be my purpose in the articles which follow to show in sharp but accurate contrasts the products of the new radicalism and the time-worn institutions which surround them. I may wander at times from the exact limits of my subject, but that is one of the privileges of an author who travels beyond the confines of his familiar horizon.

For three days our steamship plowed through the long heave of the North Atlantic, the freshly painted deckwork glistening in the rays of an unclouded December sun, pointing her bow steadily toward Land's End. The gentle breeze was laden with the caressing balm of spring. The sun blazed away at the starboard promenade deck, compelling the casting aside of wraps and rugs. The weather was that which one would expect in June. Holding an even keel on that parallel of latitude which bisects Hudson's Bay, it seemed difficult to realize that more than a thousand miles to the south of us the United States was laden with snow and blocked by ice.

The morning dawned gloriously on the day we were to have our first view of the out-jutting land of England. The Scilly Isles were due to raise their jagged crests on the eastern horizon at about noon, and as the hour approached scores of glasses were leveled in that direction. At 10 o'clock there was not a suspicion of vapor beneath the huge vault of sky and sea. Like magic the aspect of the seascape changed. Between us and England there was reared a wall of smoke-like fog. Swirling clouds of mist writhed above our heads. The sun struggled bravely for a moment and then disappeared, nor did I see his face again save at brief and rare intervals for more than two months when homeward bound and far out on the Atlantic.

The observation is probably not original, but a sojourn in the great English metropolis and in the provincial cities of the United Kingdom, combined with a study of its business men and their methods, suggests the theory that their traditional and boasted conservatism is nothing more or less than the evolutionary outcome of successive generations spent in a fog inclosed and mist limited horizon. It may be set down as a plausible proposition that the inhabitants of any community who for long periods of time are denied a range of vision not exceeding a few hundred yards must be more than ordinarily gifted with imagination in order to escape the handicap of mental narrowness. This theory is fortified by the fact that your traveled Englishman broadens so rapidly and thoroughly that he bears only the faintest resemblance to those who yet peer dimly down the vaporous streets of London, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow and other cities.

When the sun shines in Great Britain at any time during the six cold and wet months of the year the fact is duly recorded in the papers as an interesting item of news. I was assured that there are places where sunshine is not regarded as a phenomenon, but I could not find them, nor did I talk with any one who had. Those who lack the money with which to escape from this awful climate and spend the season in Southern France or Italy, risk the salvation of their immortal souls by asserting that they love fog, and chant the praises of smoke-grimed and mist-choked old London.

The following morning found us well up the dreaded English Channel. On this occasion it was smooth as the proverbial mill pond. This destroyed another of my illusions to the effect that this particular reach of water is always rough. On the return trip it was even more smooth. We circled into the mouth of the Thames, feeling our way cautiously through the fog, past the wrecks of ships which had run aground or sunk under similar circumstances. At times the fog lifted enough to give a glimpse of the low, muddy and uninteresting shores of this famous river.

Another illusion went by the board when a long, rakish craft belonging to the Royal Customs Deparment challenged our progress, cast a line on board and made fast to our port quarter. I had always read and, of course, implicitly believed that England was the one free trade nation on the globe where the pilgrim's personal effects were not made the object of the prying inspection of minions of a custom office. But not so. No soiled sock or guilty pajama escaped the keen eyes or ruthless fingers of the uniformed men who swarmed the decks where the luggage had been placed.

Two months later a New York customs inspector accepted my word that my satchels and trunks contained nothing dutiable, and did not even open them for a glance at their innocent contents. One learns from travel many things not written in the books.

Having successfully stood the test of his majesty's officials, we were permitted to land on English soil at Tilbury. This town is about twenty-five miles from London, and we were assured that a special train was awaiting us to whisk us into the metropolis. The American who can restrain a smile at the first sight of an English railway train is either absolutely lacking the sense of humor or is depressed over a recent death in his family. They look like the toy trains one expects to find at Coney Island or at kindred resorts which make a specialty of freaks.

All these points and others which I shall mention from time to time are familiar to those who have traveled in England, but I am attempting to write for the benefit of those who have not, and whose impressions are derived from authors who rave about ruined castles, moated granges, terraced slopes and other lovely things. The young woman from Central Illinois who writes those entrancing English society novels would never attempt another if she could see her hero and heroine begin their honeymoon trip in a typical first class English railway train.

It may be possible to design a structure more unsightly and uncomfortable than the standard English compartment passenger car, but no one has yet succeeded in doing it. It is difficult to describe it and more so to comprehend the excuse for its existence. Take a small freight car just high enough for a well proportioned man to stand erect in. From floor to roof erect three or four partitions so as to completely separate one "compartment" from another. Then place two benches in each compartment so that they will face one another. The backs must be perfectly straight, and under no circumstances must any attempt be made to conform to the curves which an all-wise Providence designed for the human body. Each bench holds five passengers, and when properly seated their knees should strike and their feet interlock. Overhead are shelves for "luggage." You are allowed to put anything in a compartment which will go through the side doors. They do not check baggage in England, and if you do not carry it with you it is likely to be lost. There is a "luggage van" for articles of the size of baby carriages. On most trains there are three classes of compartments, viz: first, second and third class. The fares on the third class are about half those on the first, and those on the second class half way between, but since the accomodations are practically the same in all of those, the average traveler saves his money by patronizing the third class cars. Were it not for the signs one would have no way of knowing whether he were in a first or a third class compartment.

Most of the station officials were aged men, some of whom probably knew Stevenson when he was a boy. Six of us took our seats in a compartment. It was a cold, raw day and the compartment contained no steam coils or other devices for giving heat. An Englishman entered and wrapped his feet and legs up in a "traveling rug." Unless you carry one of these heavy and cumbersome things about with you in England pneumonia will mark you for an untimely end. I had no rug, and the outlook was desperate. At this crisis the door opened again and a station employe slid a long rectangular piece of metal along the floor, dropping it with a dull thud.

"What is that?" I asked of an English fellow passenger, ashamed a moment later of my shocking display of ignorance.

He evidently resented my addressing him without the formality of an introduction, but yielded enough to inform me that it was a "foot warmer." He removed his glove, placed his hand fearlessly upon it and looked at his companion with a slight expression of surprise on his face.

"It's warm; don't you know!" he said.

"My word; it is! Extraordinary!" exclaimed the other. We all solemnly placed our hands upon it and felt the pleasing sensation of heat.

"What makes it hot?" I asked, determined to pursue my investigation to the bitter end.

"It's filled with hot water," answered my English friend, with a pitying smile. Somehow, I felt that he suspected I was an American. His next words confirmed that suspicion.

"You don't have those in America?" he said with a rising inflection.

"Our country folk use something like it when they go bob-sled riding," I said, anxious to prove that my native country is well abreast of the progress of the age. "When I was a boy my mother used to wrap a hot brick in a flannel cloth and put it in the bed to warm our feet. We have a great many of the modern improvements, even if ours is a new and undeveloped country" I concluded, fearing to say more for fear that he would think me boastful, like so many of my countrymen.

We pulled out from the station and soon got under a moderate headway. The sensation seemed familiar as we jolted over the rails, but it was some moments before I could remember where I had experienced it in former years. Then the recollection of stolen rides on the rear car of a branch line freight train came back to me. It was like renewing one's youth. One car was guiltless of springs and the axles were fastened rigidly to the frame on the same mechanical principle that small boys construct a wagon from a dry goods box with the heads of cheese boxes for wheels. When we hit a curve the wheels had to slip and skid in order to make up the difference. It struck me as rather primitive, but thrilling and interesting. While I was thinking about it we stopped at a station and one of our passengers showed unmistakable signs of an intention to get out.

Now the exit from the standard English train, even when it has come to a standstill at a station, is rather a serious matter for a novice. On many trains the doors are locked from the outside by a station employe and when you reach your destination you must wait to have it unlocked or else open the window—if you can—and crawl out. But in this instance the door was not locked, and the operation of escaping was camparatively simple. There is no knob, handle or other opening device on the inside—why, no one seems to know—so the wise traveler lowers the window, reaches out his hand by a contortive effort and turns the fastening, which is exactly similar to that on the ordinary public hack or carriage. Then he alights, letting in a blast of cold air. The one sitting nearest the door is supposed to close the window. When the conductor desires to collect or inspect tickets the train is halted at a station long enough to permit him to open each separate door for that purpose. No one calls out the next station or the one at which you have stopped.

As an example of how not to do a thing the English railroad is without a peer in this boundless universe. There are better trains in the Kingdom than the one from Tilbury, but the one just faintly described is a fair sample of what one has to patronize, unless making long and direct journeys. It is impossible to put in print the terrors and discomforts of a day spent in a "compartment car." It is not an uncommon thing for women to be maltreated and even murdered without being able to make an outcry or in any way attract attention. You are likely to be locked in with a besotted human beast and forced to endure his company for hours. The bigoted, home-raised Englishman objects to the modern American type of railway coach on the ground that it is "too promiscuous." He says he wishes "seclusion." A hog in a pen might raise the same objection to an open pasture.

It took us an hour and twenty minutes to run the twenty-five miles. As we neared the confines of London the pall of smoke and fog darkened. In the London station one would have thought it midnight, but it was not yet 3 o'clock of that December afternoon. There were no clouds, only smoke and fog.

My first impression of London as the cab swung out of St. Pancras Station and through a maze of crooked streets, was the absolute perfection of the stone pavements over which we were driving. There are thousands of miles of solid stone pavements in London, almost as smooth as newly-laid asphalt, and I doubt if any city in the United States can duplicate a hundred yards of it. There is no secret or deep mystery concerning the manner in which this over-weening superiority has been attained. English cities expend vast sums of money on their street pavements. They spend it honestly, intelligently, and lay a pavement to last, not a year, but a century. I shall have more to say on this subject later.

My second impression was that there were no street obstructions. On every hand old buildings were being torn down and new and grander ones rearing in their places. Many of the streets were narrow, but no piles of brick nor steaming mortar beds filled one foot of the space of the thoroughfare. No delivery wagons backed up to a curb and deliberately unloaded while a procession of vehicles formed in line to await the convenience of a lazy and imprudent driver. From curb to curb the streets of London are absolutely reserved for traffic. No city in the world has so stupendous a traffic, and in no city are horses so rapidly driven, yet, accidents are so rare as to be almost unheard of.

Traffic holds to the left instead of to the right, as in our country and in most others. The driver who swings a foot across the center of the street is liable to arrest and severe punishment. At all crossings of consequence are "isles of safety"—oval raised spaces in which the pedestrian can stand until the way is clear for his passage. New York, Chicago and other American cities are in the infant class so far as the regulation of street traffic is concerned, when one watches the clockwork precision on London's swarming highways.

And who directs this miracle? The London "bobby"—the clubless, unarmed, silent and undemonstrative London policeman. I first saw him at work when the cabby turned into Trafalgar Square, circled past the National Gallery and was about to turn into the Strand. Ahead of us and behind us was an unbroken line of cabs, 'buses and vehicles of all descriptions. To the right another glittering line was swiftly passing. We had just reached the angle formed by the Strand and St. Martin's lane when a man wearing an oilcloth helmet and a long waterproof cape raised the forefinger of his right hand. I doubt if the driver tightened the reins. Even the cab horses know what that raised forefinger means. We stopped right then and there. The entire line halted like a toy railroad train which runs against a parlor wall. Across the opening my companion pointed to a prancing team and a carriage with a glittering crest.

"That's the Duke of Bedford," he said. "It would have made no difference were it the equipage of the Prince of Wales."

It was as he said. Rich and poor, high and low, aristocrat and plebeian stand on one democratic plane when it comes to crossing a street in London. Only the King has the right of way, and he seldom uses it. Through the parted stream of traffic the foot passengers passed in safety, like the Children of Israel, when Moses raised his wand and parted the waves of the Red Sea. Thus on hundreds of street intersections vehicles yield to pedestrians and pedestrians to vehicles, both great tides checked intermittently to move again steadily and swiftly on.

"All of these drivers cannot be paragons of virtue and discipline," I said to my London friend, as the officer gave the signal that we might go on. "Suppose our cabby had disregarded that raised forefinger? He would have been arrested, I presume?"

"Not now," replied my instructor. "That would have stopped traffic, and nothing is permitted to do that. The officer would have taken his number, and he would have been arrested to-morrow

(Continued on Fourth Page.)

FAMOUS WORKS OF ART.

RUBENS' "INFANT CHRIST, ST. JOHN AND ANGELS."

A "Light Fancy," pure and simple, is Rubens' "Infant Christ, St. John and Angels." Yet it is a very beautiful picture, and so popular was it in its day that the artist had to make a duplicate of it. This duplicate is in Berlin, while the original is in the Albertina collection at Vienna.

One would be almost tempted to say that no serious artist would portray this subject in such a manner, but one has to understand Rubens to understand his pictures. He was a painter, a colorist, first of all, and both his reason and imagination were softened and guided by this strong instinct of his nature. He loved to paint flesh. He liked the sheen and glisten of it, and he thoroughly understood how to render these things with his brush.

He studied carefully his own children, and romped with them a great deal. He delighted in watching the play of expression on a child's face from moment to moment, and in point of fact the various faces and expressions in this picture are taken from his own offspring.

The picture is almost purely decorative. It is a color scheme, in which the purple grapes and fruit and dark green leaves and foliage count for fully as much as the children.